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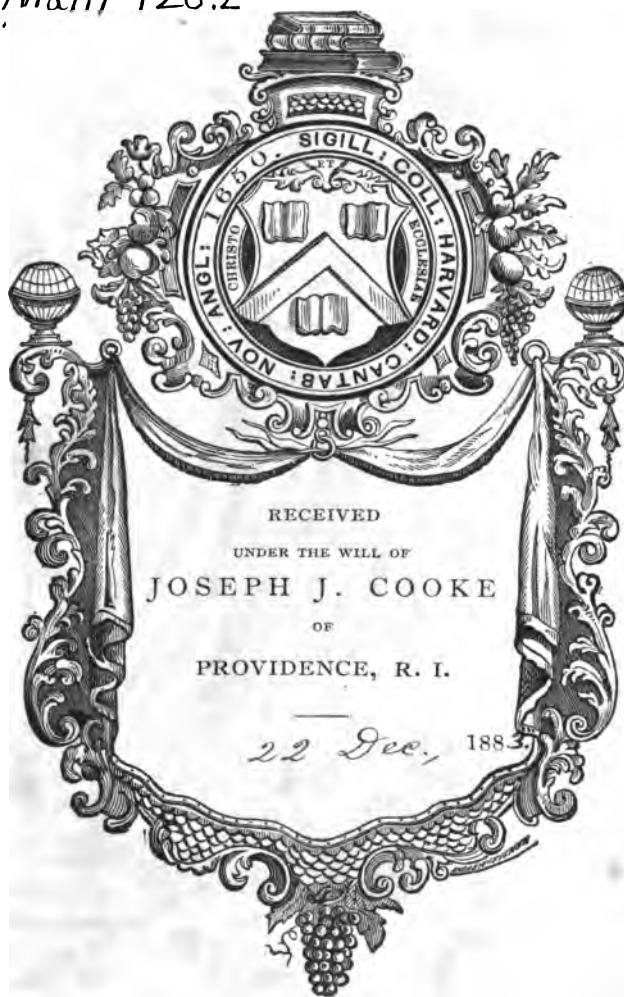
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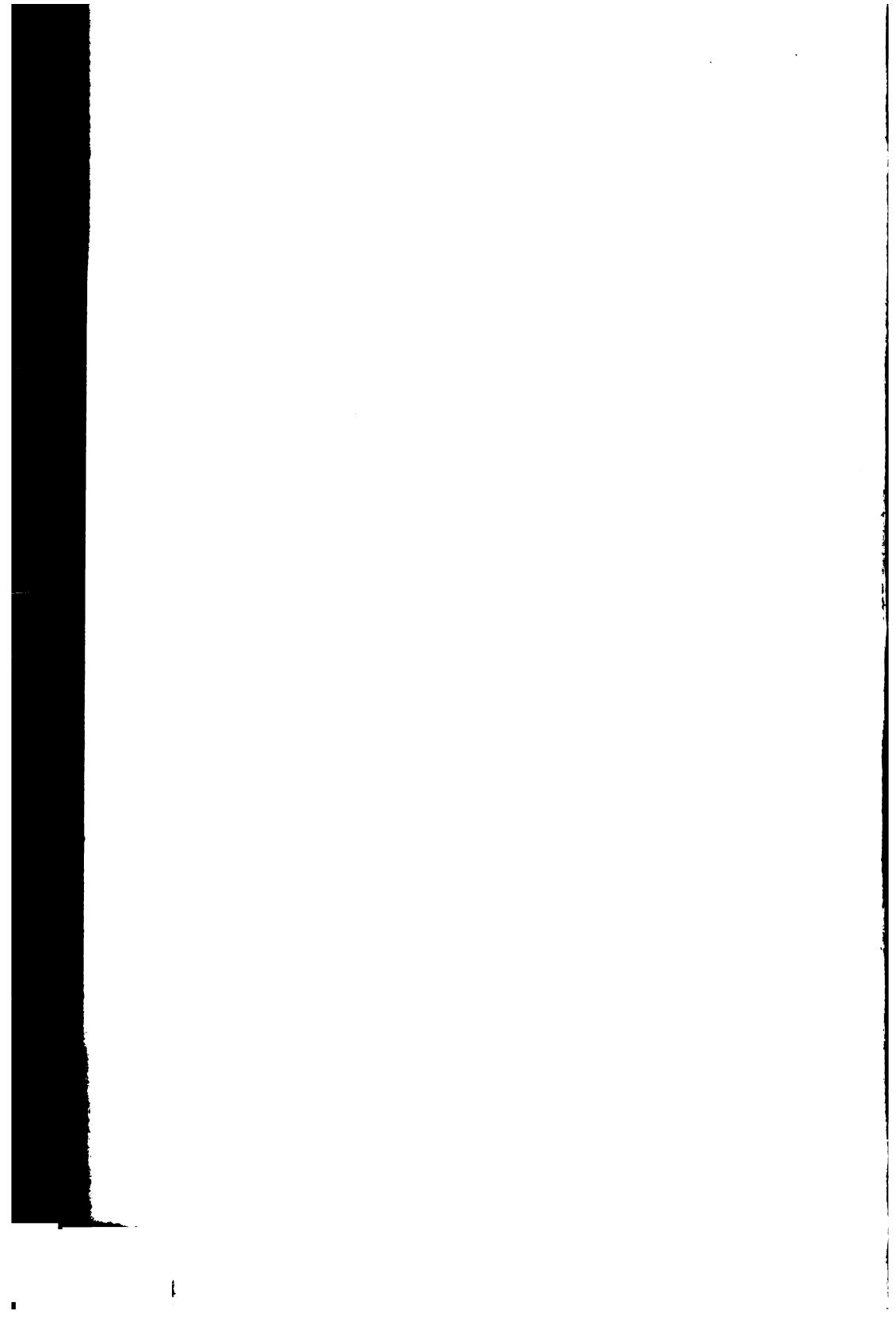
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Math 126.2







# REMARKS

CONCERNING

THE LATE DR. BOWDITCH,

BY THE

REV. DR. PALFREY,

WITH THE

REPLIES OF DR. BOWDITCH'S CHILDREN.

By

Nathaniel Ingersoll Bowditch, and others.

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BOSTON:

CHARLES C. LITTLE & CO.

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*Boston,*  
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## LETTER

ANNEXED TO THE SECOND EDITION

OF THE MEMOIR OF

NATHANIEL BOWDITCH.

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*Boston, October, 1840.*

REV. JOHN G. PALFREY, D. D.

SIR :

In your Eulogy upon Dr. Kirkland, late President of Harvard College, recently published, after mentioning his resignation, you proceed as follows : —

“ His pupils and the public were agitated and distressed by the currency of a report, to the effect that the step was precipitated by his not having been treated, in every quarter, by those who acted with him, with the delicacy and respect due to his greatness and his infirmity. But if, among the good men who shared with him the highest places of College authority, any

one could for a moment so far forget himself as to offer disrespect to that venerable excellence, which in better days it was impossible for disrespect to come near, it is not a wrong which history has recorded, and it is not one, therefore, which history has to right ; and as, whatever private grief he may have had, his magnanimity did not permit him to proclaim it, he would not have us choose this occasion for its redress. The corporation took the position which might have been assuredly expected, when, at a meeting at which every member was present, a vote was passed, expressing ‘a full sense of all the benefits conferred by him on the institution, over which,’ it is added, ‘he has presided for so many years, with singular dignity and mildness, raising its reputation, and increasing its usefulness by his splendid talents and accomplishments, his paternal care, and his faithful services.’ ”

This publication has in our opinion rendered necessary a few remarks upon Dr. Bowditch’s connection with Harvard College.

When the late President of the University resigned his seat, having, for several months, suffered from an attack of paralysis, it was currently reported that Dr. Bowditch had treated him, when enfeebled by disease, with a disrespect upon which he durst not otherwise have ventured. He was therefore denounced through the public press as “a Salem sailor,” and called upon by name to retire from the Corporation of the College. A charge so odious in itself, and so entirely at variance with the whole tenor

of his life, Dr. Bowditch felt to be undeserving of any public notice or refutation. He prepared, however, a manuscript volume of about one hundred and fifty pages, entitled "Scraps of College History," containing a simple and exact narrative of all he knew of College affairs, and especially a statement of the several measures of reform which he had felt it his duty to introduce and to advocate, and the circumstances attending or growing out of their discussion and adoption. His narrative he freely showed to his friends, and even, at last, found it necessary to declare that if he were any longer thus assailed, he might, perhaps, be induced to publish it—an intimation which produced the desired effect. This was a measure to which he did not wish to resort; and he was convinced that no true friend of the College or of the President would force it upon him. We should willingly leave Dr. Bowditch's character as a man, and his claims as a benefactor of the college, to be decided by a perusal of this narrative. But we do not feel that its details need now be resorted to. It is sufficient that they enable us to *assert*, and, if need be, to *prove*, that the report above-mentioned is utterly false. To the last moments of life Dr. Bowditch continued to approve of all he had said and done as a member of the Corporation. Ready, as he always was, to make the most full amends or apology for any harsh

or hasty remark or action, there was not a word or an occurrence in the intercourse between himself and the Head of the University, or any one else connected with its management, which, had it been in his power, he would have recalled. While Dr. Kirkland was in perfect health, and possessed his mental powers in their full vigor, Dr. Bowditch had spoken to him with truth and freedom, and had acted towards him with energy and decision under circumstances peculiarly trying and painful — but only *when, where* and *as*, his sense of duty imperatively required. He acted deliberately and calmly — never “unhappily forgetting himself even for a moment.” When infirmity fell upon and obscured the splendid intellect of the President, none who know Dr. Bowditch need to be assured that it was with greater reluctance and forbearance than ever before, that he found himself still obliged to urge certain changes in the administration of the College. But under such circumstances he could not have treated any one with unkindness or disrespect.

Dr. Bowditch died in the belief that he had lived down this calumny. Little could he have anticipated that so soon after his death, upon a most solemn and public occasion, an individual, recently at the head of one of the departments of the College, and who, though not an officer of the

institution at the period alluded to, had yet the means of knowing the truth, should nevertheless have seen fit, under the disguise, indeed, of gentle insinuations, and the show of much forbearance, distinctly to allude to this charge in a manner which none of his hearers could misunderstand.

The mere insertion of this paragraph in the discourse when delivered, we should not have noticed. But a *printed* Eulogy, pronounced by request before the Alumni of the University, detailing the character and services of one of its most universally popular presidents — may be no ephemeral publication. It may exist to be referred to by the future historian of the College. The industrious antiquarian, a century hence, would perceive some secret meaning in this paragraph, and would find the mystery solved in the newspaper charge against Dr. Bowditch distinctly and publicly made, and never, until now, distinctly and publicly denied. In a discourse like the present, every assertion — every insinuation may, if uncontradicted, thus become matter of history. And if wrong is done, “it is a wrong which history has to right.”

We do, therefore, in reply to your remarks above quoted, make the present full and explicit denial of their justice as applied to Dr. Bowditch. We say that a regard for truth, rather than “magnanimity,”

led Dr. Kirkland to refrain from making such a charge. He had no "private griefs" in this matter for any friend or eulogist to "redress." It is true that when his resignation was accepted by the Corporation, Dr. Bowditch was present and did not oppose the vote then passed. He duly appreciated the graceful and dignified manners, the mild and kindly feelings, and the brilliant talents of the President, and acknowledged him possessed of many qualities by which he was eminently fitted for the station he so long held. He was desirous that he should retire with honor from that station; and cordially entertaining, as he did, many of the sentiments embodied in that vote, he did not feel himself called upon to oppose its adoption; though in the narrative before-mentioned, he states that he did not, for reasons there assigned, give it his assent by voting in the affirmative.

It may be said that we have now been defending a parent's memory from a mere fancied charge — one which you have not made. But on a former occasion you have said of him, what was, indeed, undoubtedly true, that "though 'no rude and boisterous captain of the sea,' there may have been occasions when a happier combination would have been produced, had the same measure of the *fortiter in re* been mingled with more of the *suaviter in*

*modo.*" It is observable that the words here quoted by you bear a strong resemblance to the more concise newspaper epithet before-mentioned. It would almost seem that you must have had it in your mind. Any argument, however, as to your meaning on the present occasion, is, we think, unnecessary. Nothing can be more certain than that your remarks were intended to apply to Dr. Bowditch. Had they been made in his life-time, he certainly would not have left them unanswered. His children yet live ; and, through them, " though dead, he yet speaketh."

N. I. BOWDITCH,  
J. INGERSOLL BOWDITCH.  
HENRY I. BOWDITCH.  
WILLIAM I. BOWDITCH.

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APPENDIX  
TO THE SECOND EDITION  
OF THE  
REV. D.R. PALFREY'S EULOGY  
ON  
PRESIDENT KIRKLAND.

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WHEN the death of the late President Kirkland awakened a strong feeling in his numerous pupils and friends, I had no ambition to take any prominent part in the honors due to his memory. I greatly regretted, that the distinguished gentleman, to whom was at first assigned the duty of pronouncing his Eulogy, found it necessary, on the eve of his departure from the country, to decline that engagement; and I would gladly have avoided the service, when proposed to me, had I not thought that the tribute intended was due from any pupil on whom the choice might fall. My time was already suffi-

ciently occupied; and I was aware  
an important incident in the Preside-  
could scarcely be referred to, with-  
ance of reflecting upon the deportm-  
individual, eminent for abilities, virtu-  
services.

The immediate cause of the Presi-  
tion was not his enfeebled health.  
such was the conclusion of certain  
who had consulted together upon the  
before there was opportunity for a c-  
of their views to him, that communic-  
been ever since. It was notorious at the  
Bowditch, in consequence, that his resignation to  
nounce, that Dr. Kirkland's Eulogy before  
My first impression, after under-  
justice to it would be possible, co-  
unpleasant my mind. My problem  
changed my mind. Further car-  
the claims of the occasion, and by s-  
most unexceptionable manner, to s-

fence to those interested in the fam-

person concerned; and I was certainly more alive to the importance of doing this, than if I had been preparing to speak in his hearing. I had the better hope of being able to effect it, inasmuch as all that was to be implied was want of "due delicacy and respect" on a specified occasion ; and, though any conduct deserving to be so characterized is blame-worthy, yet every one is liable "so unhappily to forget himself" as to commit it, and a charge of the kind is no impeachment of any man's honor.

With these views, I prepared and pronounced the passage on the 47th page. For a time I flattered myself that the object proposed had been accomplished. I received numerous congratulations on my success in having said what was just on the one part, and liable to no reasonable objection on the other. During four months, only two suggestions had reached me of a different character ;—one, from a distinguished officer of the College, who expressed in a friendly manner his regret that I had thought it necessary to make the allusion ; the other, from a gentleman who agreed with me in opinion, but who informed me that my course had occasioned discontent to the sons of Dr. Bowditch, a discontent which they have since publicly expressed in a Letter appended to the second edition of the *Memoir* of their father.

I have felt called upon thus to expand my remarks, because the main subject, and Letter, of the truth of the denial, and age in my Eulogy relates. The denial is liable to be misconceived it, I presume that the writers of the Letter of the President's College attended by President of both, — That, at the last meeting of Dr. Bowditch, which also gave pain intention to deny. Had a statement credited in their life-time been unheard of until now. A letter from me, that, Dr. Bowditch, "having, in [the] opinion, very deliberately made with that earnestness and vehemence, which belonged to his ardent character, in cases of strong interest, condemn what he deemed totally

might be the talents or station of those with whom he differed, and however far he might be from intending any disrespect, but which in fact, no doubt, at times gave pain." The day after that meeting, Dr. Kirkland told an intimate family friend, whose statement to that effect is before me, "that Dr. Bowditch had made some remarks to which he could reply only by resigning his office." I cannot suppress a fact which the same writer adds: "This was the only time that Dr. Kirkland ever voluntarily alluded to the subject to me or in my presence. \* \* I never heard Dr. Bowditch alluded to in his presence in any terms of censure, that he did not immediately call to notice, or direct attention to, some of the excellent features in his life and character."

The feelings of President Kirkland, then,—those of one of the sweetest-tempered of men,—were wounded by treatment, more or less harsh, endured by him from Dr. Bowditch. He was aggrieved from that quarter by what friends of his have regarded as want of "due delicacy and respect," and what a witness of the transaction calls "that earnestness and vehemence of manner, which belonged to his [Dr. Bowditch's] ardent character," and with which "he expressed himself on the spur of the occasion." If, in what "in fact gave pain," in this instance, Dr. Bowditch was, according to the suggestion in the

letter last quoted, "far from intend  
spect," this is information from the  
President, from their esteem which the  
only have to gratify to receive, and  
made long ago. If, on the explana-  
tion of "delicacy and respect,"  
and his family were and are of opinion  
all that was "due to his greatness and  
it is an opinion which they were and a-  
tertain, but it is one which the pupils  
dent cannot share.

I hope that these remarks will place  
on a footing satisfactory to all parties  
say nothing admits. I provoke no controv-  
the public production to be taken as ju-  
ago, as it appears, by one of two par-  
nor the writer is no longer here to contradic-  
appear) to withdraw or qualify. E-  
material circumstances different, I b-  
to the late President, which would j-  
ing defiance in his behalf, however c-  
be that his good name would be pro-

from any controversy which might thence arise; \*  
 and I decline any such officious part. Whoever  
 means thus to assail him, must be content to do so  
 without excuse from me. Nor is cause for such a  
 publication to be found in any necessity of urging  
 the claims of Dr. Bowditch upon respect and grati-  
 tude as an able, zealous, and useful friend of the  
 College. Those high claims have not, that I know,  
 been impugned in any quarter deserving of attention;  
 nor are they more cordially acknowledged by any  
 men in the community, than by those who lament  
 the occurrence which has called for these remarks.

The Letter declares, that the vote of the Corpora-  
 tion, testifying to the faithful services of President  
 Kirkland, had not the support of Dr. Bowditch. It  
 was the weight for the public, notwithstanding.  
 He was the only authorized guardian of the interests of  
 the College, nor the only qualified judge of the  
 President's fidelity. It is customary to place full  
 in such testimonials; and accordingly there are  
 who, possessing such, feel authorized to prize  
 highly, as yielding some compensation for  
 of much labor,—it may be, of some sacrifice,

<sup>\* Dr. Kirkland died childless. His nearest friend is absent from the  
 country, their part, that they have no anxiety respecting the effect of any such  
 application as appears to have been contemplated.</sup>

— passed in the service of the College. They will value them less, if they are to suppose that it will be competent hereafter to the children of some individual of the College government to cast discredit upon its vote.

Towards the close of the Letter a remark, formerly made by me respecting Dr. Bowditch, is introduced in connexion with an offensive expression, said to be extracted from a newspaper paragraph. I do not perceive the purpose of this, unless it was to express the suspicion that I was the author of the newspaper communication. I was not its author, nor ever saw, nor, to the best of my recollection, heard of it, till it was brought to my notice in this letter. I never wrote anything respecting Dr. Bowditch, except the sketch of his character, from which the sentence in the Letter is quoted, published in the "North American Review," and beginning on the 177th page of the 48th volume of that Journal.

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[This Appendix has been here inserted in order that the whole subject might be before the reader.]

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## REPLY TO REMARKS

CONTAINED IN

## DR. PALFREY'S APPENDIX.

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OUR attention having been called to the Appendix, which accompanies the second edition of Dr. PALFREY's Eulogy on Dr. KIRKLAND, we think it incumbent on us to make a few brief comments upon it.

In the Eulogy, Dr. Palfrey has alluded to a report current at the time of Dr. Kirkland's resignation. In his Appendix he says, that after "careful reflection," he came to the conclusion that it was his duty to allude to that report; and he now distinctly and explicitly says, that the report referred, and that he also in his remarks refers, to Dr. Bowditch. What then was the *report* which Dr. Palfrey says it was his "problem," to state in such an "unexceptiona-

ble manner," as "to avoid giving offence to those interested in the fame of the eminent person concerned"? This report, traced by Dr. Bowditch to a source which made it to the world appear entitled to full credit, was as follows: "That at the last meeting of the Corporation which the President ever attended, and when he was enfeebled by disease, Dr. Bowditch had said to him '*that he was imbecile, and unfit for his office, and that if he had any regard for his own dignity, he would resign.*'" The truth of this report was at once peremptorily denied by Dr. Bowditch. It, for a time, called forth against him the most bitter invectives. Years had passed away, however, and we had reason to believe that this calumny had passed away with them. We were therefore greatly pained to hear it most openly and publicly alluded to. Nothing was left for us but to repeat the full and explicit denial with which it was originally met by Dr. Bowditch. And we do now assert, that neither these words, nor any other of like import, were used on the occasion. And as both in the original report, and in Dr. Palfrey's reference to it, much stress is laid on the President's infirmity, and his supposed consequent unfitness for office, we pointedly declare, that throughout Dr. Bowditch's remarks, no allusion, however remote, was made, or could have been intended, to either. We regard this

to be a question not of opinion, as Dr. Palfrey considers it, but a question of fact; and if issue is joined on it, we are ready and able fully to prove our assertion.

Should Dr. Palfrey deny that he alluded to this report, how are we to understand the expressions so carefully selected by him, in which he alleges it to have been reported, that the President was not treated by Dr. Bowditch "with the delicacy and respect due to his greatness *and his infirmity*;" and in reference to which report he observes that Dr. Bowditch, "so far forgot himself as to offer disrespect to that venerable excellence, which *in better days* it was impossible for disrespect to come near"? We conceive it certain that Dr. Palfrey did intend to allude to the report which we have mentioned. We know of no other. Dr. Bowditch knew of no other. It was current at the time. But be it that report or some other to which he meant to allude, what is the charge which, in the Eulogy, he actually made on this ground against Dr. Bowditch? It is in effect this, that, when the President was infirm and defenceless, Dr. Bowditch treated him with a disrespect upon which it would otherwise have been impossible for him to venture. A charge of this kind we considered to be a most grave impeachment of our

father's honor ; and we therefore promptly repelled it by an explicit denial of its truth.

Has Dr. Palfrey made good this accusation ? Not at all. He has not even attempted it. On the contrary the statement of his only witness is utterly inconsistent with his charge. For this witness of the transaction expressly says, that Dr. Bowditch was known "in cases of strong interest" "to condemn what he deemed totally wrong, *whatever might be the talents or station of those with whom he differed.*" In other words, that Dr. Bowditch was not guilty of the baseness attributed to him, of saying or doing aught to the President in his infirmity, which he would not have said or done to him in his best estate.

In the Eulogy, then, Dr. Palfrey alludes to a certain report of the day, and endeavors to revive and perpetuate it in a charge, elaborate and ingenious, yet of so vague a character, that he hopes it will prove perfectly satisfactory to the family of him whom he assails. But the truth of this original charge having been thus signally negatived by his own witness, Dr. Palfrey, in his Appendix, changes his ground, saying that all he meant to imply was "want of due delicacy and respect on a specified occasion," and that as earnestness and vehemence of manner are admitted, our denial, in this view at least, raises no question of fact, but one of opinion only. His ground there-

fore, now seems to be that *something* was said by Dr. Bowditch to the President at a Corporation meeting, which gave pain to the latter; and the only light which Dr. Palfrey gives to the public, is that derived from the letter which he has quoted. By this letter it would seem that Dr. Bowditch had, in the writer's opinion, very deliberately made up his mind upon some subject then under discussion, and at that meeting expressed himself with the "vehemence and earnestness of manner" "with which he was known to condemn what he deemed totally wrong." How, then, were the parties situated? Dr. Palfrey, says, "Dr. Bowditch was not the only authorized guardian of the interests of the college, nor the only qualified judge of the President's fidelity." True, he was not. But he was the President's associate, and as a member of the corporation, his equal, and equally bound to the discharge of like high official trusts. He used the manner in condemning what he deemed totally wrong. Even Dr. Palfrey will not pretend that not done in the conscientious discharge If he wishes the verdict of the world upon the question of opinion, he must furnish to the world the data upon which that opinion is to be made. He must bring forward all the facts which this plain speaking. We act merely upon the decisive.

And here it may be pertinent to inquire what was the judgment of the Corporation itself on this occasion. Had it been their opinion that Dr. Bowditch spoke to the President with a want of due delicacy and respect, how is it to be explained, that that body should not in some way have distinctly noticed conduct so "blame-worthy"? Did any thing of the kind however take place? Far from it. Notwithstanding Dr. Bowditch's remarks, the President's resignation was immediately afterwards accepted, without the slightest allusion being made to the subject. What is the fair inference from this expressive silence of the Corporation?

But there is one other, and only one other ground upon which Dr. Palfrey attempts to rest his charge. He says, "it was notorious at the time, as it has been ever since, that his (the President's) resignation took place suddenly, in consequence of offence received from Dr. Bowditch at a Corporation meeting." It is undoubtedly true that the President was pained by Dr. Bowditch's remarks. No one who knew any thing of the matter, we think, ever denied this. Certainly we never did. Dr. Bowditch never did. There is however an important fact in this connexion, to which Dr. Palfrey has not at all alluded. It is this. Immediately after the meeting at which he felt himself to be thus offended,

the President sent in his resignation in terms which distinctly mentioned that what occurred at that office; leaving his offence with Dr. Bowditch to be clearly inferred. This letter, partly by accident, and partly by the corporation to whom it was addressed, came of the corporation whose counsels he decided to withdraw it, and sent at once into the hands of the President's friends, by the letter now on record. Of all this, it should be borne in mind that Dr. Bowditch at the time knew nothing. It was wholly the work of the intimate friends of the President, who were unwilling that his resignation should be put, even by implication, on the ground of what Dr. Bowditch had said or done.

It seems, further, from Dr. Palfrey's last document, that the President himself adhered carefully all his life to the better considered views which had dictated this second letter of resignation; and it was well known that, till death separated them, the two parties never met but courteously and pleasantly.

Now, under these circumstances, we ask how Dr. Palfrey, or any one else, after the lapse of twelve years, and the death of both parties, and when the whole matter is nearly forgotten, can feel authorized to take as the ground of the President's resignation, that which he himself retracted by the deliberate

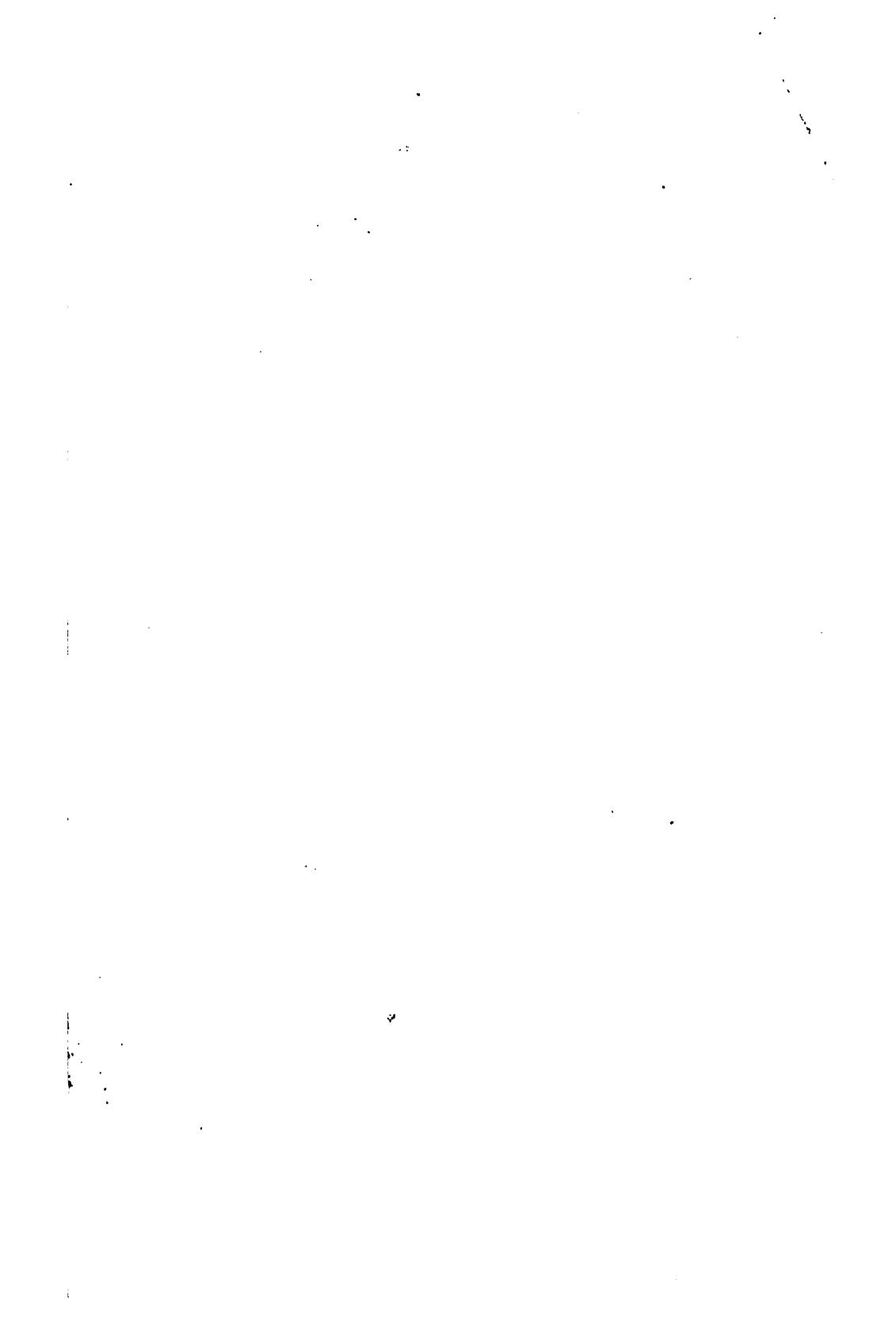
advice of his intimate friends, and to which during the whole remainder of his life he himself never seems to have recurred, or to have been willing that any one else should recur?

In regard to Dr. Palfrey's charge against us of "casting discredit" upon the vote of the corporation passed in consequence of the resignation of Dr. Kirkland, we would only say that our remarks on this subject were made on the recorded authority of Dr. Bowditch himself, and solely because it seemed to us that his support had been claimed by Dr. Palfrey for that vote. Our statement was necessary to prove that Dr. Bowditch had acted conscientiously and consistently.

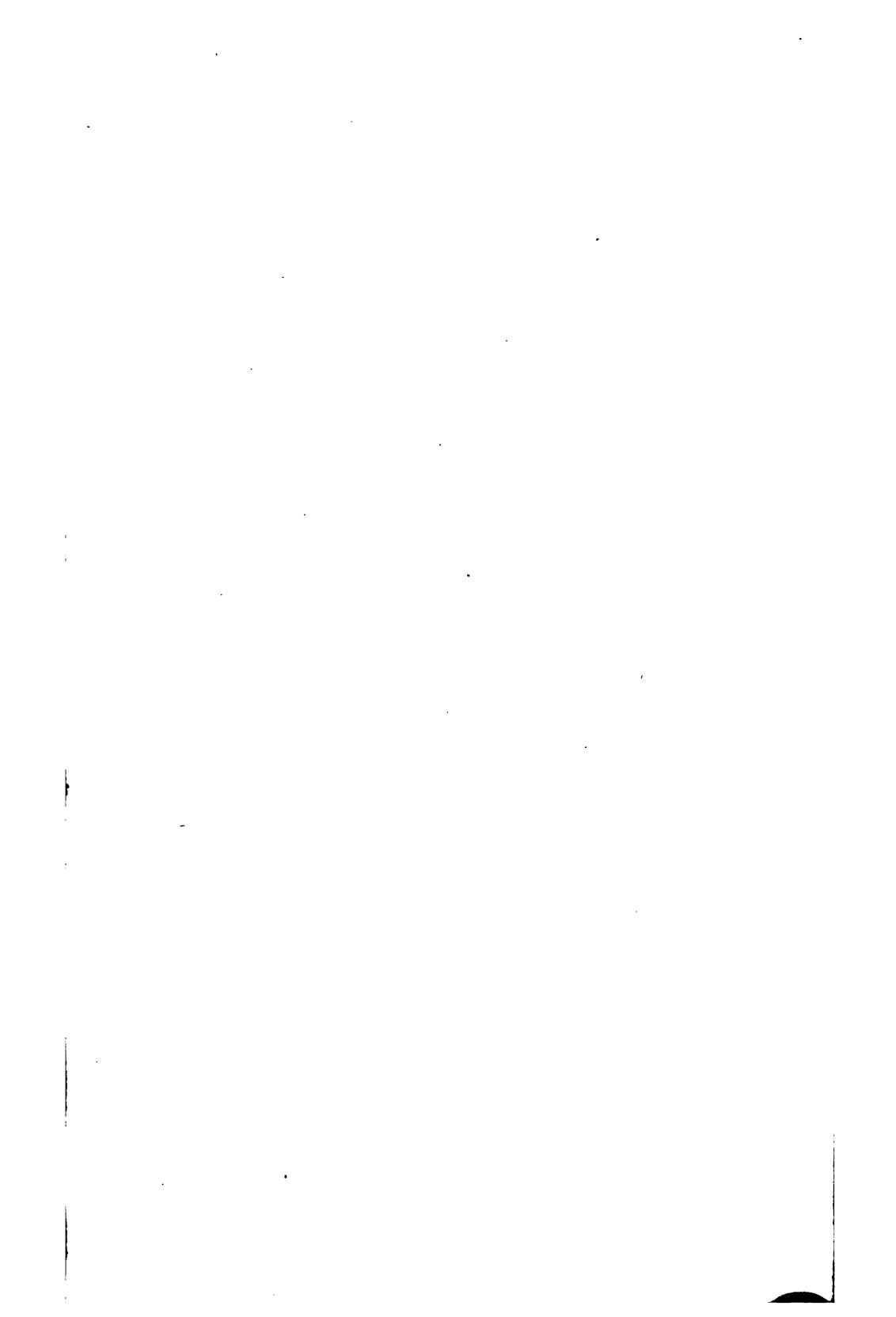
Allusion has been made to the manuscript narrative left by Dr. Bowditch. Indiscreet friends of the President, and perhaps in some instances those who wished harm to the college, attacked Dr. Bowditch anonymously, through certain newspapers of the day. He immediately prepared this narrative. He defied all attacks: he had his answer ready in his own hands. From that time until Dr. Palfrey's Eulogy was printed, so far as we know, these attacks have never been repeated. We do not believe that Dr. Kirkland, if living, or his most judicious friends, or the best friends of the college, would wish to have any thing more appear upon this subject. We shall therefore, for

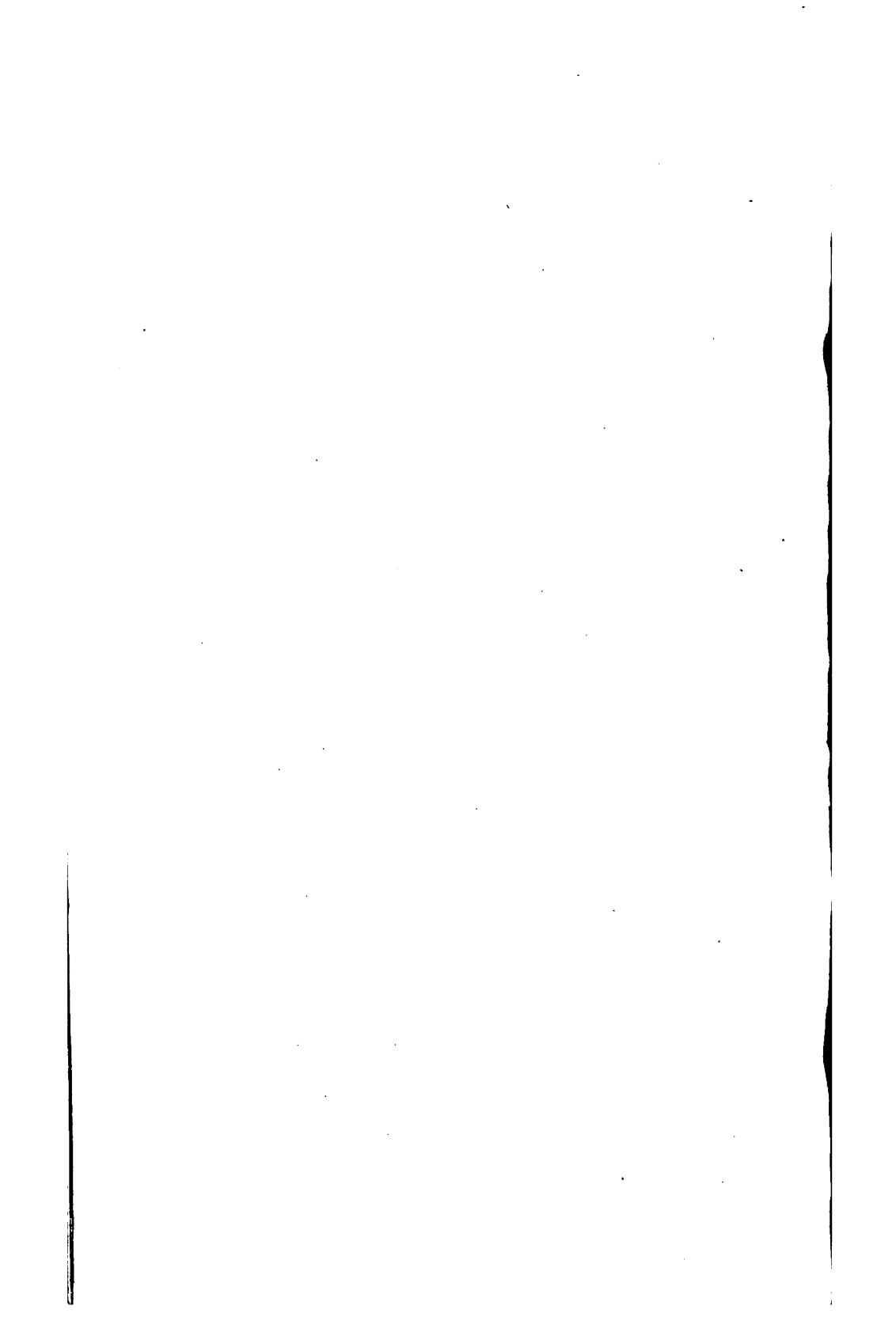
these as well as other obvious reasons, avoid the publication of this narrative, or of any thing else, unless such publication should be imperatively called for from us as children of Dr. Bowditch, in defence of his fair name.

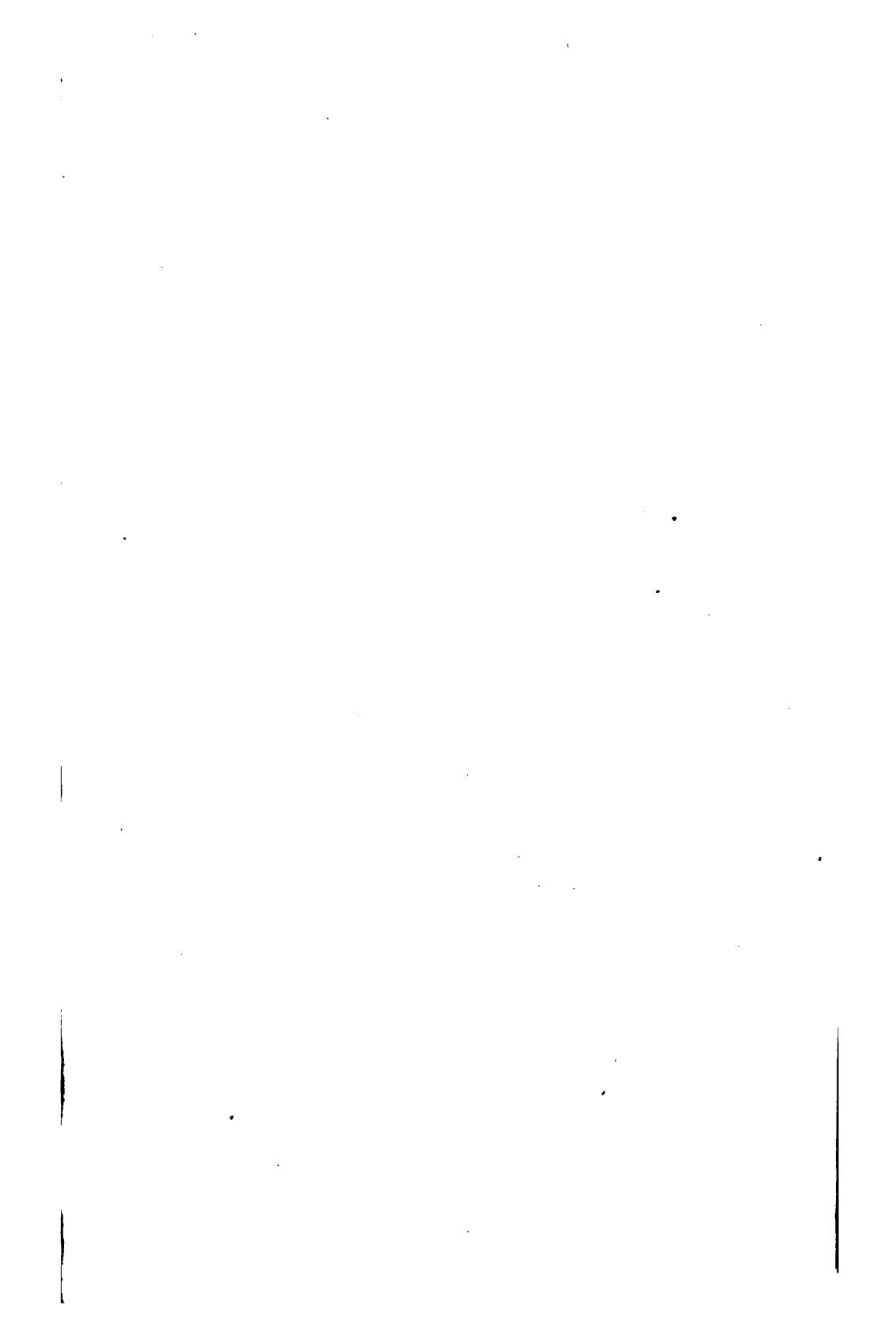
To conclude : — Dr. Palfrey has, it seems, received numerous congratulations upon the skilful and guarded mode in which he originally made his charge. Perhaps there are, however, persons in the community, besides ourselves, who judge that it would have been a more manly course for the eulogist of Dr. Kirkland, if convinced that he had been wronged by Dr. Bowditch, plainly and unequivocally to have stated this conviction, and to have taken the occasion publicly to redress his wrongs. And some perhaps there may be, who think with us, that, inasmuch as both parties had died in peace with each other and with the world, it would have been the more christian course, carefully to have abstained from alluding to such long past differences.

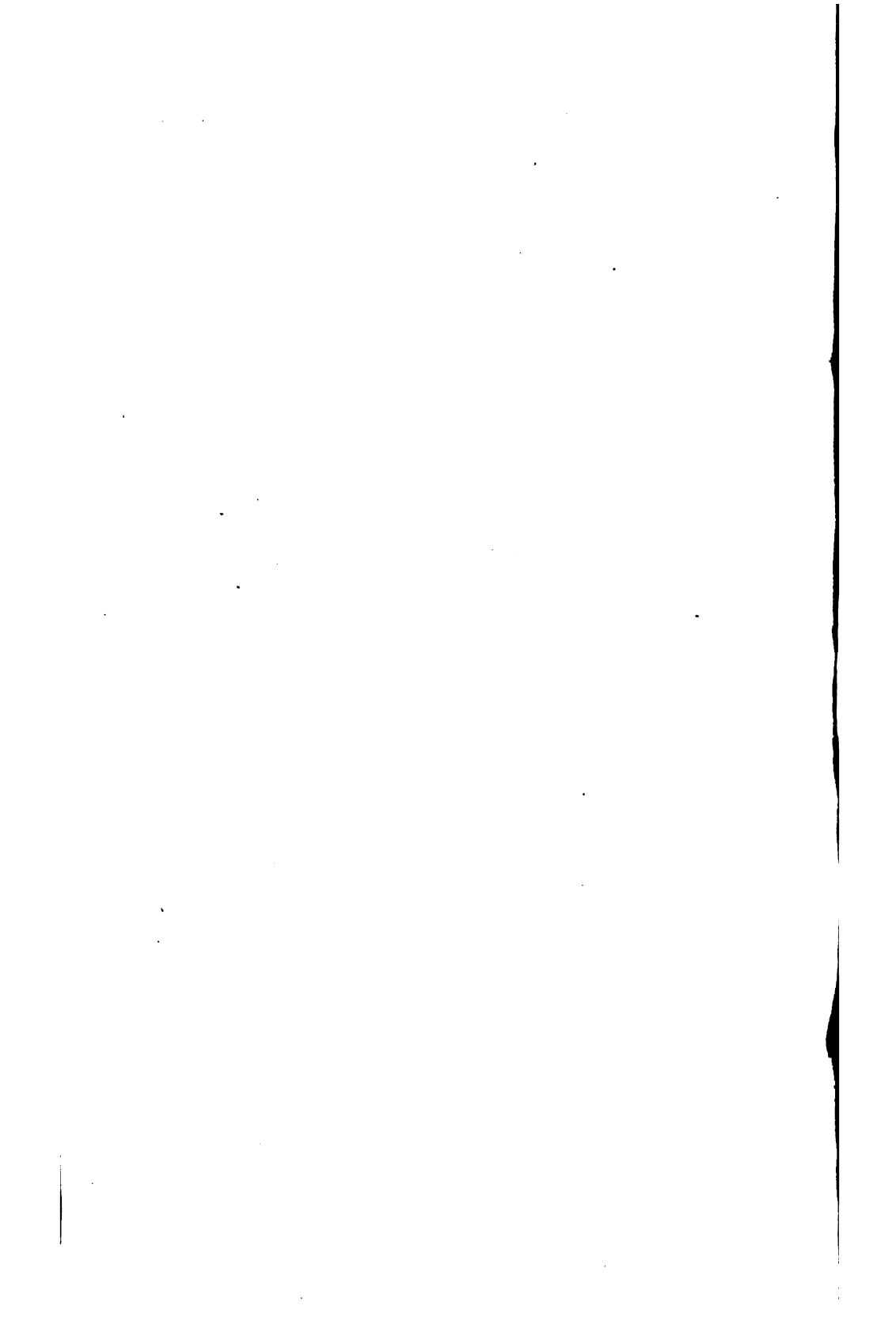


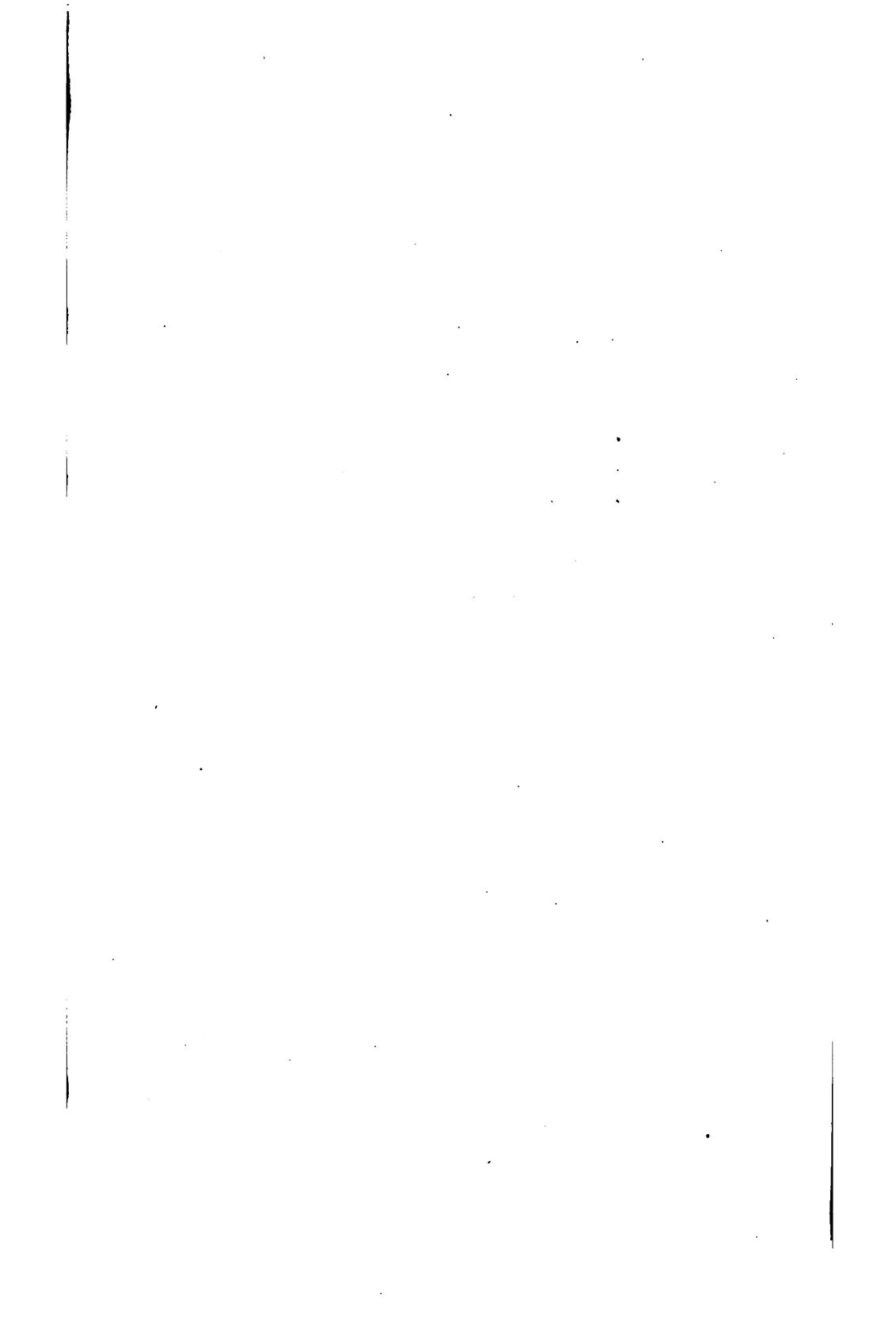
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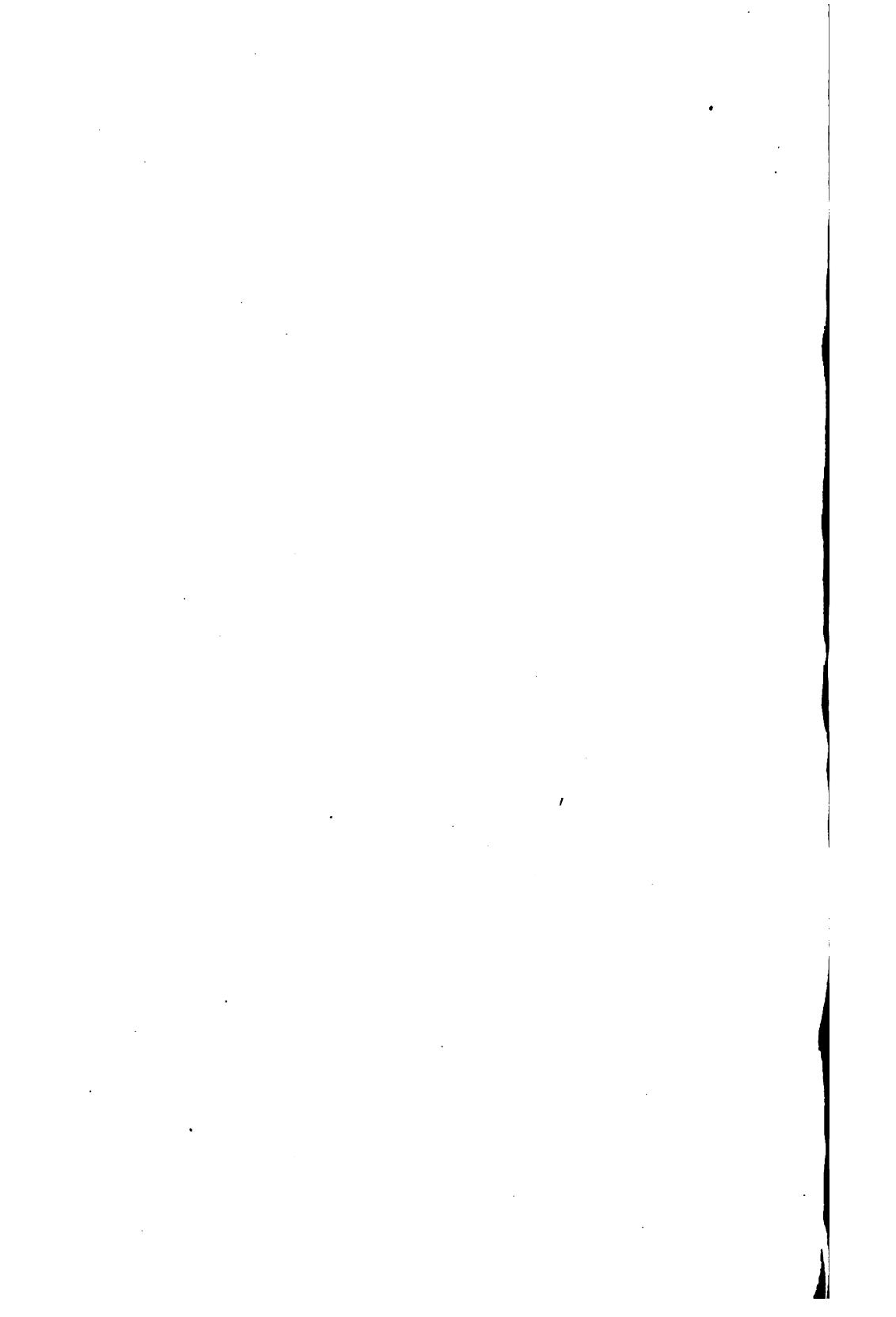




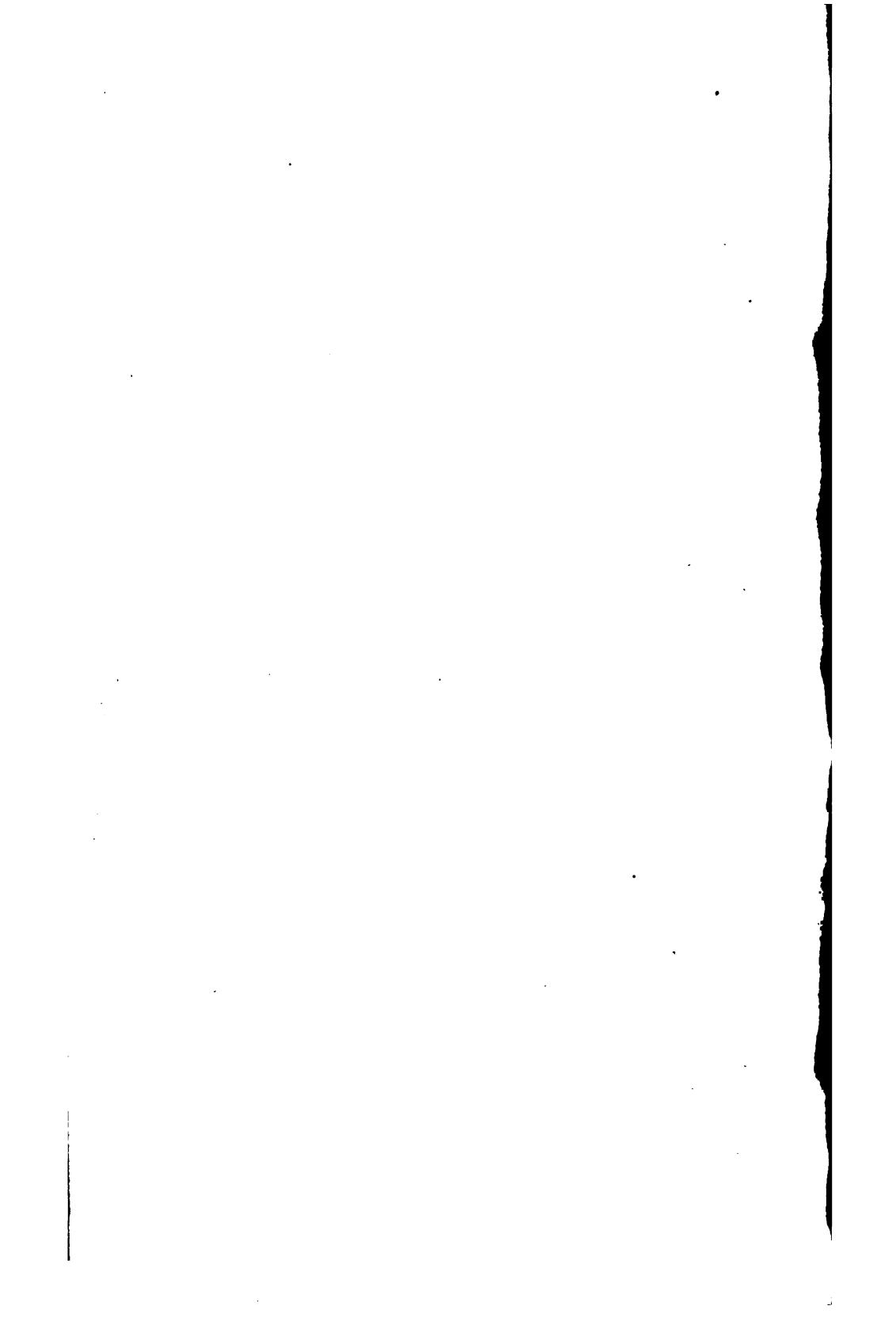


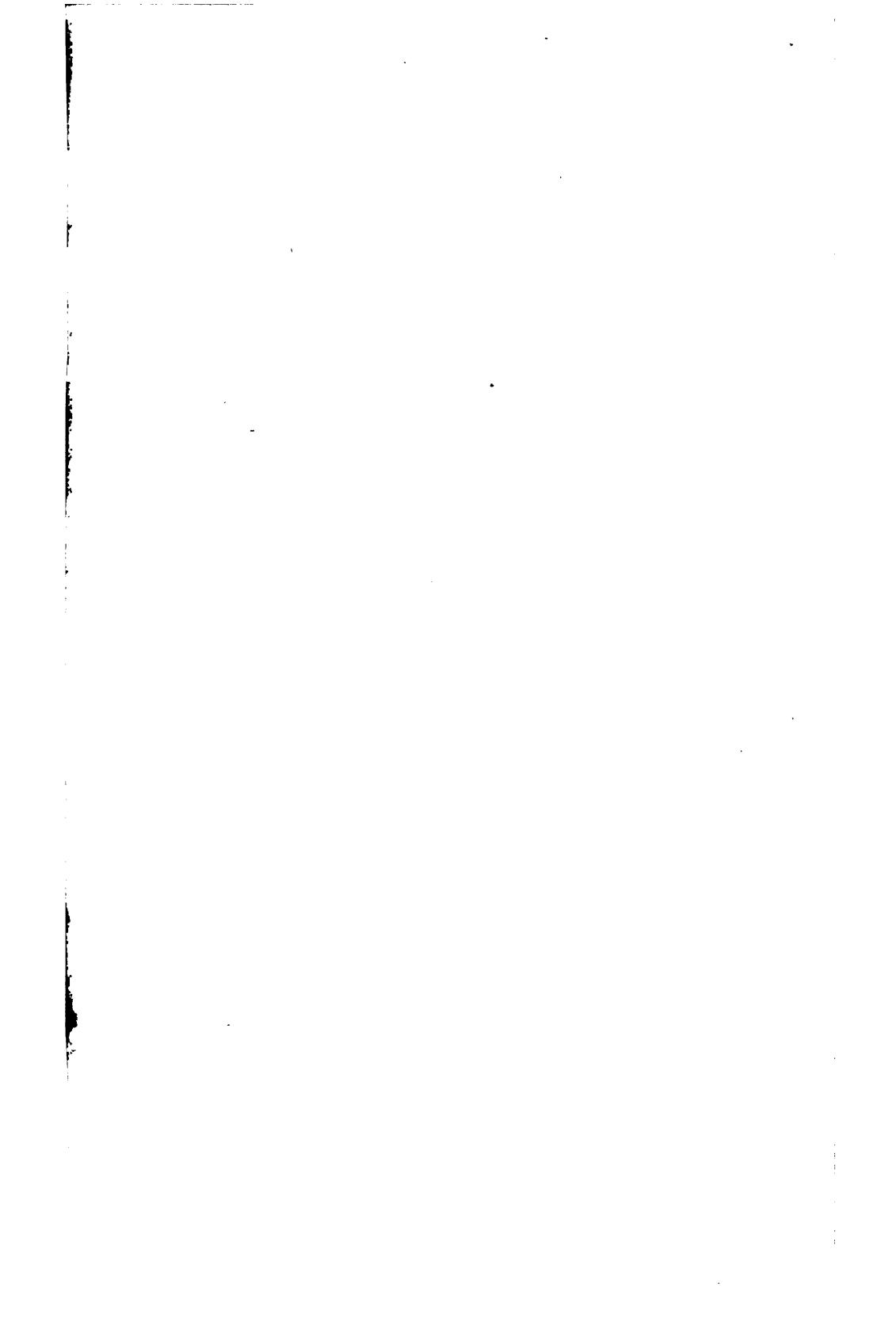




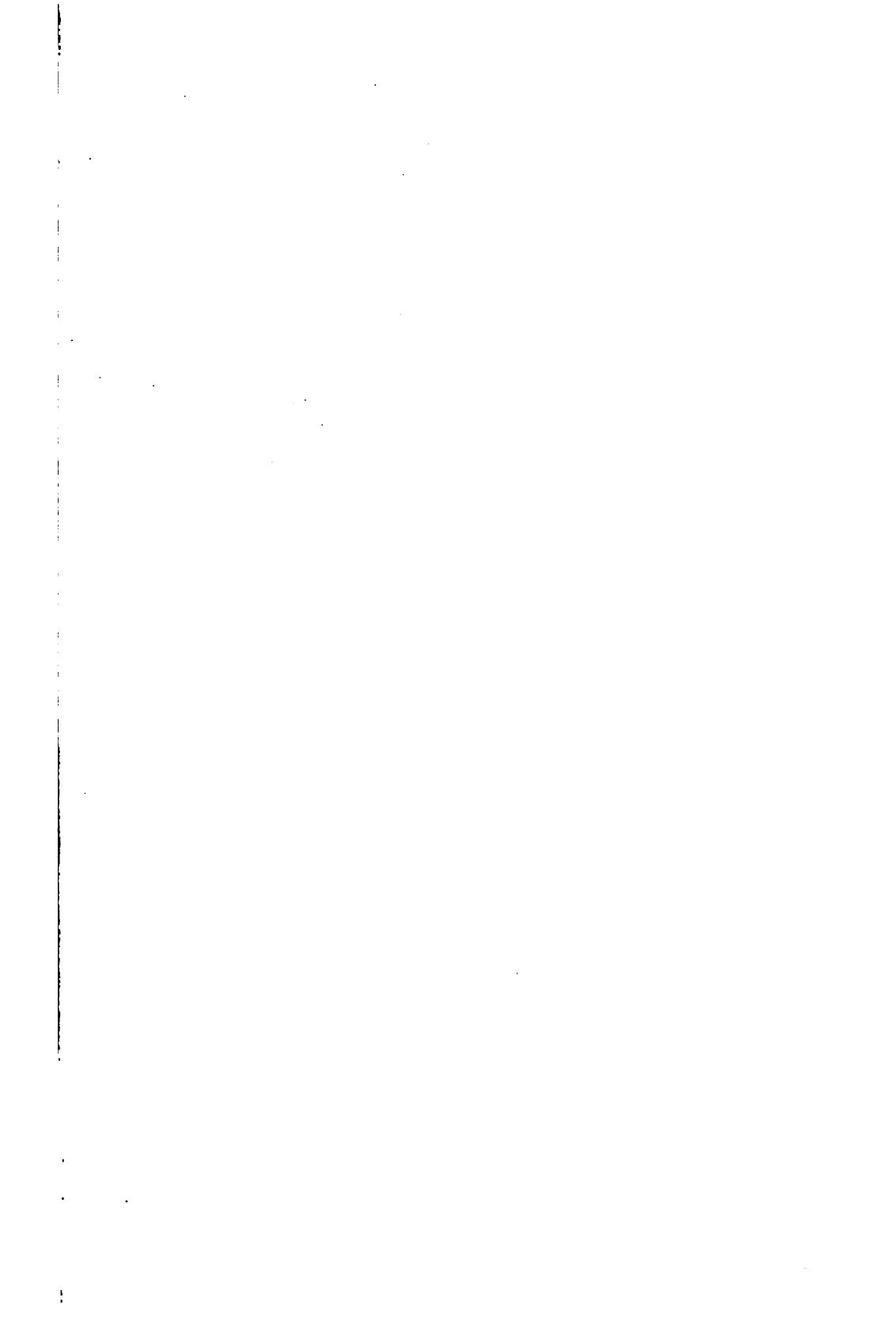














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